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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

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INFO AMEMBASSY MANILA

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PFOR JA RP

SUBJ: WORLD WAR II STRAGGLER ONODA RETURNS

SUMMARY: ALL JAPANESE MEDIA REPORTING FULLY EVERY ASPECT OF WORLD WAR II STRAGGLER ONODA RETURN TO JAPAN AFTER 29 YEARS IN PHILIPPINE JUNGLE. FAMILY AND NATION READY TO WELCOME HIM WARMLY AS LONG LOST SON, BUT ONODA ACTION LARGELY VIEWED AS ANACHRONISTIC BY YOUNGER GENERATION. END SUMMARY.

1. NEWS OF DECISION TO RETURN TO JAPAN BY WORLD WAR II STRAGGLER, FORMER ARMY 2ND LT HIROO ONODA VIRTUALLY MONOPOLIZED ALL NEWS MEDIA YESTERDAY AND TODAY. AFTER 29 YEARS OF HIDING IN JUNGLE ON LUBANG ISLAND, PHILIPPINES ONODA WAS PERSUADED TO RETURN HOMEMARCH 10 BY HIS WARTIME COMMANDER, FORMER MAJOR YOSHIMI TANIGUCHI, WHO ORIGINALLY GAVE ORDER THAT HE REMAIN BEHIND TO SPY ON ENEMY EVEN AFTER JAPANESE ARMY DEFEATED. ONODA, WHO ELUDED FIVE GOJ SEARCHES SINCE 1954, TOLD PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER EMERGING FROM JUNGLE THAT HE WOULD HAVE REMAINED FAITHFUL TO THIS WARTIME ORDER FOR REST OF LIFE. ONODA TALKED TO TANIGUCHI FOR ELEVEN HOURS IN JUNGLE BEFORE ACCEPTING ORDER TO GIVE UP, WHICH WAS DRAFTED IN OLD ARMY STYLE. ONODA SCHEDULED TO RETURN TO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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JAPAN VIA JAL CHARTER MARCH 12 FOR REUNION WITH AGED PARENTS.

2. PRIMIN TANAKA, WHO SAID THAT ONODA WOULD BE WARMLY WELCOMED HOME, EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR COOPERATION OF GOVT AND PEOPLE OF PHILIPPINES IN WIRE TO PRESIDENT MARCOS. FONMIN OHIRA SENT SIMILAR WIRE TO FOREIGN SECRETARY ROMULO.

3. PRESS AND TV ARE REPORTING EVERY DETAIL OF SUCCESSFUL QTE RESCUE UNQTE OF ONODA AND SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS, AS WELL AS REACTIONS OF HIS AGED PARENTS, HIS BROTHERS INCLUDING ONE WHO MET HIM IN JUNGLE, AND ANYONE WHO KNEW HIM BEFORE.

4. INITIAL OVERT JAPANESE REACTION TO ONODA RETURN APPEARS TO BE ONE OF UNRESTRAINED HAPPINESS FOR HIM AND PARENTS. HOWEVER, IMPLICATIONS OF ONODA STORY HAVE RAISED RENEWED PUBLIC QUESTIONING OF TRADITIONAL VALUES AND PRE-WAR

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. ALTHOUGH JAPAN PEN CLUB CHAIRMAN KOJIRO SERIZAWA (AGE 76) STATED THAT HE WAS DEEPLY MOVED BY ONODA'S FIERCE DETERMINATION TO LIVE ALONE IN JUNGLE, 18-YEAR OLD AUTHOR OF RECENT BEST-SELLER QTE GOOD MEN DIE YOUNG UNQTE, AKIHITO OHNISHI, CRITICIZED PRE-WAR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM FOR HAVING SHAPED MINDS OF MEN LIKE ONODA AND EARLIER RETURNEE

FROM GUAM, EX-SGT YOKOI. LONG-TIME SCHOOL TEACHER KANICHI KANAZAWA (AGE 65) EXPRESSED PERSONAL HORROR AT THIS EXAMPLE OF RESULTS OF NATIONALISTIC PRE-WAR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. IN ANOTHER VEIN, TV NEWS REPORTER MIEKO KENJO (AGE 28) EXPRESSED HOPE THAT NO MORE STRAGGLERS RETURN BECAUSE SHE DOUBTED THAT LIFE IN JUNGLE COULD BE WORSE THAN UNDER PRESENT ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS IN JAPAN.

5. COMMENT: OUTWARDLY JAPAN IS PREPARING TO WELCOME BACK LONG LOST SON ONODA WITH CONSIDERABLE SENSE OF PARENTAL EMOTION. UNDERLYING THIS EVENT, HOWEVER, IS DEEPER ISSUE ROOTED IN DISCONTINUITY OF PRE-WAR VALUE SYSTEM MARKED BY END OF WAR. YOUNGER GENERATION SEEMS PUZZLED BY ONODA FIDELITY TO MILITARY ORDER LONG FORGOTTEN BY OTHERS, AND BY HIS AVOIDANCE OF EARLIER SEARCH MISSIONS. MOREOVER, HIS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INSISTENCE AT THIS LATE DATE ON WRITTEN ORDER RELEASING HIM FROM MISSION IS WELL NIGH INCOMPREHENSIBLE. QUESTIONS RAISED BY YOUNG ABOUT ONODA BEHAVIOR AS RESULT HAVE ALREADY PROMPTED SOME CRITICISM BY MIDDLE-AGED GENERATION OF WHAT THEY VIEW AS IRRESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE CULTIVATED BY POST-WAR EMPHASIS ON MATERIALISTIC GOALS. FURTHER CLARIFICATION OF REACTIONS MAY BE EXPECTED TO DEVELOP WITH RETURN OF ONODA TO JAPAN, PARTICULARLY IN RESPONSE TO MEDIA INTERVIEWS HE MUST INEVITABLY

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